



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

This is a subject, upon which it would be easy to write volumes ; but as our present object is only to write a review, and as our readers are not fond of long articles, we must hasten to a close. We have said so much upon the principle of beauty, that we have left ourselves but little room to speak of the means of preserving it. These, however, may be summed up in a few words. With all our respect for our friend L'Ami, we apprehend, that a pleasant humor, a quiet conscience, and plenty of exercise in the open air, will be found to be the best cosmetics. The whole theory upon this point, as far as the preservation of beauty is concerned, is, in fact, very neatly expressed in the ancient adage, *Handsome is, that handsome does.*

ART. VIII.—*Memoirs of Oberlin.*

Memoirs of John Frederic Oberlin, Pastor of Waldbach, in the Ban de la Roche. Compiled from authentic Sources, chiefly in French and German. London. 1829. pp. 362. 8vo.

Steinthal, or the Ban de la Roche, is a small canton hidden in the mountains of the German boundary of France. It belonged to the province of Alsace, which was ceded to Louis XIV. in 1648, and divided into the departments of Upper and Lower Rhine. La Roche lies in the latter, within a day's journey of Strasburg. Its area contains about nine thousand acres of land, constituting two parishes ; the Rothau settlement forming one, and the hamlets of Foudai, Belmont, Waldbach, Bellefosse and Zolbach, the other. Waldbach, the central village, and the seat of the parsonage, stands on the acclivity of the Champ de Feu, a mountain which rises three thousand six hundred feet above the sea, and is supposed to be of volcanic origin. The temperature and fertility of the district greatly vary ; in the higher parts, the climate is said to be Russian, while the valleys enjoy the soft warmth of a Genevan sky. In the bleak exposures, the snow, in many years, remains from September to June. The prevalent religion is the Lutheran, the toleration of which was guarantied to the inhabitants on their union with France.

Owing to its inaccessible site—having only a foot-path leading to the German highway—the barrenness of the soil, and

the ignorance of the population, consisting of not more than seventy or eighty families, this district was well nigh forgotten. It furnished no attraction to draw the traveller from his course, or to invite the visits of traders. Its spiritual guardian—the Lutheran Consistory of Strasburg—seem to have assigned it as a place of retirement for their superannuated curates, who contributed nothing to the moral or civil advancement of their charge. The result of this disastrous combination was, that in 1750, the people were on the confines of primitive barbarism. Cut off in their mountain seclusion from intercourse with the moving world, they gradually lost the natural incentives to labor, and gave way to their constitutional inactivity. Their fields lay fallow, or scarcely repaid the tillage, because the cultivators were ignorant of the virtues of manure; they lived in wretched hovels, cut out of the rocks, or dug into the sides of the mountains; the potato—long the staple of the district—being their main, and often their only food.

In that year, however, whether accidentally or from compunction, the Church presented a man of enterprise and piety to the hopeful benefice. In the exploratory examination which M. Stouber made of his charge, his first inquiries were directed at the institutions of education. He was, accordingly, conducted to the principal school, (saving the antiphrasis,) where the pupils were rioting in noise and play. The pedagogue was discovered stretched on a pallet in a corner of the room, and candidly disclosed, in reply to the questions of his visitor, that the station of teacher had been conferred on him in consideration of the ability with which he had tended the Waldbach pigs; his age and infirmity disqualifying him for a swine-herd, he professed to teach the children all he knew; which, as he owned, was nothing. The masters in the other villages had no advantage over this veteran, except in youth, and when Stouber endeavored to persuade some of the better informed young men to undertake the task, he found that the office had become so degraded in the public estimation, that there was no prospect of success. He at length adopted the expedient of abolishing the vulgar title of schoolmaster, and a number at once consented to act as *Messieurs les Regents*. Teachers and a suitable building being provided, the popular prejudice was excited against the innovation, by a dislike of its expensiveness, and the fear of not a few, that their children were to be submitted to some occult mode of acquiring

knowledge ; of which they thought they discovered alarming indications in the detached letters and syllables, used by the abecedarians.

The progress of the pupils in the mystery of reading dispelled these fears ; and such, at length, became the emulation for knowledge, that Stouber was encouraged to open a seminary for adults, who were taught on Sunday, and in the evenings of winter. He distributed among them fifty bibles, each divided into three portions, for more extensive circulation. When they became convinced that these diminutive copies were as authentic as the large book they had been accustomed to see in the pulpit, they were highly prized and sedulously perused.

Excepting an interval of four years' service in another cure, Stouber resided at Waldbach in the faithful discharge of his duties until 1767, when he accepted the appointment to a church in Strasburg, and prevailed upon Mr. Oberlin to become his successor in the Ban. To the biography and character of this individual we now direct the attention of our readers.

Jean-Frederic Oberlin was born at Strasburg, on the last day of August, 1740. His father was a teacher in the gymnasium of that place, a man of good acquirements and respectability, and the instructor of his nine children. To their affectionate mother, also, they were indebted for a sound and prudent inculcation of their moral and religious duties. John Frederic manifested an early inclination to a military life, but readily yielded to the wish of his father that he should embrace a learned profession. Several anecdotes are related of the uncommon benevolence of his disposition in childhood, and the unusual sacrifices and personal courage he displayed in behalf of the suffering or oppressed. These traits are at once recognised as the germs of a character, which expanded into noble developement in his manhood.

After the usual preliminary education, Oberlin entered the theological class of the University at Strasburg, and in due time was ordained as a minister. He did not undertake any parochial charge, but served for seven years as tutor in the family of a distinguished surgeon, in whose service he casually acquired a portion of medical knowledge, which was of great use to him afterwards in Waldbach. The following pleasant anecdote is related as an example of the influence he acquired by his exemplary virtues among his fellow-citizens.

‘An honest tradesman, relying on the power of his faith, came to him one day, and after a long introduction, informed him, that a ghost, habited in the dress of an ancient knight, frequently presented itself before him, and awakened hopes of discovering a treasure buried in his cellar ; he had often, he said, followed it, but had always been so much alarmed by a fearful noise, and by a dog, which he fancied he saw, that the effort had proved fruitless, and he had returned as he went. This alarm, on the one hand, and the hope of acquiring riches on the other, so entirely absorbed his mind, that he could no longer apply to his trade with his former industry, and had, in consequence, lost nearly all his custom. He, therefore, urgently begged that Oberlin would go to his house and conjure the ghost, for the purpose of either putting him in possession of the treasure, or of discontinuing its visits. Oberlin replied, that he did not trouble himself with the conjuration of ghosts, and endeavored to weaken the notion of an apparition in the man’s mind, exhorting him at the same time, to seek for wealth by application to his business. Observing, however, that his efforts were unavailing, he promised to comply with the man’s request. On arriving, at midnight, at the tradesman’s house, he found him in company with his wife and several female relations, seated in a circle in the middle of the apartment. Suddenly the whole company turned pale, and the man exclaimed, “Do you see, Sir, the Count is standing opposite to you?” “I see nothing.” “Now, Sir,” exclaimed another terrified voice, “he is advancing towards you.” “I still do not see him.” “Now he is standing just behind your chair.” “And yet I cannot see him; but, as you say he is so near me, I will speak to him.” Then rising from his seat, and turning towards the corner where they said that he stood, he continued, “Sir Count, they tell me you are standing before me, although I cannot see you, but this shall not prevent me from informing you, that it is scandalous conduct on your part, by the fruitless promise of a hidden treasure, to lead an honest man, who has hitherto faithfully followed his calling, into ruin—to induce him to neglect his business—and to bring misery upon his wife and children by rendering him improvident and idle ; begone, and delude them no longer with such vain hopes.”

‘Upon this the people assured him, that the ghost vanished at once. Oberlin went home, and the poor man, taking the hint which in his address to the Count he had intended to convey, applied to business with his former alacrity, and never again complained of his nocturnal visitor.’

In 1766, Oberlin accepted a chaplainship in a French regiment ; but while he was occupied with the preparatory studies,

the situation and prospects of the people of Steinthal were represented to him by M. Stouber, in such a light, that, at his solicitation, he resigned the military appointment. He found no competitor for the station, and entered on his residence at Waldbach in March, 1767, being at that time in the twenty-seventh year of his age.

The only mode of communication which the greater part of the parish had with the neighboring towns lay through the river Bruche, where its waters were shallow enough to be passed on foot; the farmers had no implements and no means of procuring them; the produce of their fields was inadequate to the consumption, and the subjection, in which they were held to the lords of the domain disheartened them from exertion.

It required much practical wisdom to effect a reform, on the scale projected by Oberlin. His first suggestion of the kind aroused the opposition of the most lawless of the subjects of his patriarchal dominion. A conspiracy was even formed to waylay him, and inflict violence on his person, which his ready wisdom frustrated. Having received notice of their design, which was to be executed on Sunday, he preached on that day on the Christian duty of meekness under injury. After the service, the ruffians assembled to await the time appointed for the execution of their purpose, and were amusing themselves in surmising how far the pastor would act upon the doctrine of his sermon, when they should put it to a practical test. Suddenly the door of the apartment opened;

‘Here am I, my friends,’ said Oberlin, with his habitual dignity and calmness, ‘I am acquainted with your design. You have wished to chastise me, because you consider me culpable. If I have indeed violated the rules I have laid down for you, punish me for it. It is better that I should deliver myself into your hands, than that you should be guilty of the meanness of an ambushade.’

At this apparition and address, they sued humbly for forgiveness; and the authors of this and other plots of the kind, which were defeated by the same firmness, endeavored to remove all reproach for their meditated offences, by double zeal in furthering his views.

In 1768, Oberlin married Madeleine Salomé Witter, an orphan daughter of a professor of the University and a relative of his own family. It was his rule to enter upon no engage-

ment or service, until he was persuaded that Providence was propitious to his design. He carried this principle to a rather amusing extreme in his matrimonial plans, and failed in his first attempt, or rather withdrew from his proposed suit, because the *mother* of the lady he had chosen did not make the first proposal; which he had fixed upon as the omen, by which he should know whether she were the partner designed for him by Heaven.

‘The mother gave him a courteous reception, and even called down her daughter, whose appearance did not, however, particularly please him; they sat down, talked of a pretended cause of the visit, of the weather, and of the news about the town, till at length, all topics being exhausted, a silence succeeded; the parties looked at each other in some surprise, for Oberlin was a novel visitor there, and then looked down again. This scene of “silent state” lasted about two minutes, when the latter, who had decided in his own mind how to act, made a polite bow and took his departure, leaving both mother and daughter at a loss to conjecture the cause of this singular visit, and the marriage was never again thought of.’

The secret most probably is, that the match was set on foot by his mother; when he made his own choice, he acted more discreetly. Miss Witter, being on a visit to Waldbach,

‘The time of her departure at length drew near. Only two days before the period fixed upon for her return to Strasburg, Oberlin felt as though a secret voice within whispered, “Take her for thy partner!” He, however, resisted the call. “It is impossible,” said he, almost aloud—“our dispositions do not agree.” “Take her for thy partner!” the voice still continued. He spent a sleepless night, and in his prayers next morning solemnly declared to God, that if He could give him a sign, by the readiness with which Madeleine should accede to the proposition, that the union was in accordance with His will, he would cheerfully submit to it, and consider the voice he had heard as a bidding of Providence.

‘After breakfast, the same morning, he found the young lady sitting in a summer-house in the garden. Placing himself beside her, he began the conversation by saying, “You are about to leave us, my dear friend; I have had an intimation that you are destined, by the Divine will, to be the partner of my life. If you can venture upon this step, so important to us both, I expect you will give me your candid opinion about it, before your departure.”

‘Upon this Miss Witter rose from her seat, and, blushing as

she approached him, placed one hand before her eyes, and held the other towards him. He clasped it in his own. The decision was made; a decision which he never found cause to regret, for, notwithstanding the determination Madeleine had made, not to be allied to a minister, she became truly devoted to his interests, and the most cordial attachment ever afterwards subsisted between them.'

To open a communication with the civilized world, was among the primary objects of the Pastor's care, and for this purpose he devised a road to intersect the great highway from France to Germany, through Strasburg. In a general convocation of the peasants, he opened his plan to them, and recommended that they should proceed at once to blast the rocks, in order to obtain stone to construct a wall about a mile and a half in length along the banks of the Bruche, for the support of a river road, which was to terminate in a bridge to be thrown across it at Rothau. The proposal astounded them as visionary and impracticable, and they unanimously began to make excuses for not assisting in the mad enterprise. Oberlin represented to them the advantages they would enjoy by having a market for their produce, and a free intercourse with the neighboring districts. The reward seemed still disproportionate to the toil. Oberlin, having wasted his arguments, now threw a pick-axe over his shoulder, and invited those to join him who would. An enthusiasm then seized the boors, which effected all that was desired. The pastor was soon followed by an ample corps, to whom he assigned their respective tasks, taking the most laborious parts to his own share, and animating them by his example. In a few months the work was completed, and a way opened to Strasburg, 'over a fine road and the neat *pont de charité*.' The roads leading from the several villages of the parishes were next laid out or improved, and thus the first step of civilization was accomplished. As the district was wholly destitute of mechanics, Oberlin selected the most ingenious lads and bound them to masters in Strasburg. When their trades were acquired, they returned to serve the peasantry, and instruct their own apprentices. The people were also persuaded to abandon their cavernous abodes, and to avail themselves of the skill of their new artisans in providing comfortable cottages.

The state of agriculture next engaged his attention. The science had been nearly lost, through the slothfulness and pov-

erty of the cultivators, yet they were unwilling to receive instruction from a clergyman who had spent his life in a city. Deferring, apparently, to their prejudice, Oberlin resolved to make a more urgent appeal to their senses, and set about cultivating the gardens of the parsonage, which were well known to contain some of the poorest land in the parish. He planted a nursery of fruit trees in trenches of better earth, and reared a beautiful orchard of several varieties unknown to that region. The experiment was successful, and the wondering peasants eagerly sought to know the secret of such mysterious success. Planting and grafting became a general employment, and the cottages were surrounded with

‘ A circling row
Of goodliest trees, laden with fairest fruit ;’

which had heretofore looked upon only

‘ The champaign head
Of a steep wilderness, whose heavy sides,
With thickets overgrown, grotesque and wild,
Access denied ; and over head up-grew
Insuperable height of loftiest shade,
Cedar, and pine, and fir.’

The old people remembered to have heard from their fathers, that prior to the year 1709, the peasantry depended principally upon wild apples and pears for their sustenance. A famine, which visited them in that year, compelled them to cultivate the species of potato, for which the district is still celebrated ; but owing to their ignorance of the method of recovering crops, the productiveness of the fields had diminished in 1767, to a third or fourth of their former returns. Oberlin taught them the science from Parmentier, procured seed from Switzerland and Holland, and they had afterwards a surplus for exportation. He introduced a variety of herbs and leguminous plants ; the culture of flax and Dutch clover became common ; he taught them to extract wine from the wild-cherry, juniper, and dog-rose, oil from beech-nuts, and brandy from elder-berries. The indigenous plants were made to yield their properties, as his botanical skill found them useful for food, or in the arts. The fermentation of manure, and the conversion of vegetable substances into compost, were important contributions to their stock of knowledge, and the improvement of the shallow soil. At great expense of labor in blast-

ing rocks, or covering them with earth, the least useful pastures were turned into arable ground, and the cattle stalled, by which means the quantity of grain, as well as of milk and butter, was greatly increased. At length, to promote the improvement of husbandry in its largest extent, he formed (in 1778) the most intelligent farmers into an Agricultural Society, connected with one at Strasburg. Appropriate works were obtained for circulation and reference, and prizes established for competition in raising produce and cattle. Once a fortnight, Oberlin devoted two hours to a familiar lecture on subjects connected with tillage and grazing.

The literary and religious improvement of his people, were no less zealously attended to than the external reforms which we have detailed. His regular clerical duties were punctually discharged in the pulpit, in friendly visits, and in private charity. M. Stouber's plan of providing schools, was greatly enlarged. To overcome the objections made to an increase of the expensiveness of education, he entered into an engagement, previously to commencing the erection of commodious edifices, that no part of their cost should be charged upon the parish funds. He began with his own slender capital, and the contributions of his friends in Strasburg; and in a few years had the satisfaction of seeing a school-house in each of the five villages, and the inhabitants voluntarily assuming the expense and superintendence of them. In the meantime, the teachers were passing through a course of preparation for their office, and children from the ages of two to six years, were the only members of the community who were not usefully employed. Nor did they long escape the vigilant providence of the pastor. To him belongs the honor of introducing *Infant Schools*, and the models of the Ban de la Roche have received few improvements, since their adoption in France, Britain and America. In each *commune*, he placed one of these nurseries under the care of two intelligent females, called *conductrices*, defraying the expense from his own resources. The children were taught to read, and to knit, spin and sew; they were entertained with pictures representing Scripture scenes, or subjects of natural history, accompanied with appropriate explanations and examination. They learned the first lines of Geography, on maps constructed for their use; they were also instructed in singing, and special attention was paid to the correction of their *patois*. At the proper age, they were removed to the higher schools, where they

passed through the ordinary branches of education, and learned the principles of agriculture, astronomy and history. Every Sunday, the children of each village in rotation, recited the religious lessons of the week to the *Cher Papa*, as he was universally called, sung their hymns, and received his exhortations. This system was devised several years before modern Sunday-schools were commenced in Great Britain.* All the scholars of the district met weekly at Waldbach, that the pastor might compare the qualifications and systems of the different teachers, and excite a general emulation among them.

The liberality of his Strasburg friends enabled Oberlin to establish a circulating library for the use of the children, and a book-society, for their seniors and for families. A number of school-books were printed for the exclusive use of the Ban. A mathematical and philosophical apparatus was procured, and prizes distributed to teachers and scholars. He prepared and published an Almanac, divested of the usual symbols of superstition, and adapted to the taste of the people. The children of ten or twelve years, were required to copy and commit to memory essays on agriculture, and were initiated in the science of botany, for which the Steinthal afforded a fine field, as its natural products are supposed to comprise one thousand of the four thousand eight hundred and seventy-four species of the French Flora. In domesticating the wild plants, and copying flowers with the pencil, the young naturalists made great proficiency; the presentation of living garlands, or of a painted copy, with affectionate inscriptions, was among the interesting acknowledgements they made upon festive occasions to the *Cher Papa* and their other benefactors. One of these occasions, was the presenting to the pastor of the first-fruits of the two trees, which each child was required to plant at a certain age in a designated spot.

In January, 1784, a severe calamity befel Oberlin in the sudden decease of his wife. This event severed his fondest hold upon life, and it became his constant prayer to be reunited to her in another world.

‘Every day he devoted whole hours to holding communion with her in those elevated frames of mind, which require not the aid of superstition to make us conscious of the presence of those we love.’

*The real founder of Sunday-schools was Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan, in the sixteenth century; and they have never, we believe, been intermitted, to this day, in that diocese.

He was left with seven children, and the care of his household devolved upon an orphan girl, whom he had adopted into his family, and who was one of the most active *conductrices* of the infant schools.

A visitor of the Ban in 1793, describes the primitive simplicity and intelligence of the inhabitants as remarkable; carrying back the imagination of the beholder to past, or ideal ages of peace and innocence. Some of the peculiarities of the worthy author of these changes are recorded. The walls of his house were covered with maps, drawings, and vignettes; and verses from the bible were inscribed over all his doors, as Moses was required to write the words of the law 'upon the posts of the house.' On the entrance of his visitors, he presented each with a printed text, of which he had thousands of copies to distribute at every opportunity, and upon which he endorsed his receipts, messages, &c. His study was lined with engravings of portraits, insects, animals, and minerals.

'I am writing this at his table,' says one of his visitors, 'whilst he is busily preparing leathern gloves for his peasant children. His family are around him, engaged in their different avocations; his eldest son, Frederic, is giving a lesson to some of the little ones, in which amusement and instruction are judiciously blended; and the *Cher Papa*, without desisting from his employment, frequently puts in a word. He took me this morning into his work-shop, where there is a turner's lathe, a complete set of carpenter's tools, together with a printing-press, and one for book-binding. I assisted him in coloring a quire of paper, which is intended for covers of school-books. He gives scarcely any thing to his people but what has been, in some measure, prepared by his own or his children's hands.

'He will never leave this place. A much better living was once offered to him; "No," said he, "I have been ten years learning every head in my parish, and obtaining an inventory of their moral, intellectual, and domestic wants. I have laid my plan. I must have ten years to carry it into execution, and the ten following to correct their faults and vices.'

Steinthal escaped much, comparatively, of the distress which attended the revolution. The pastor was deprived of his stipend, and the subscriptions of the parishioners, which they offered in its place, never exceeded fourteen hundred francs annually; whilst for two successive years, he received but four hundred francs in each. He would never accept fees for his parochial duties. 'My people,' he used to say, 'are

born, married, and buried free of expense, at least, as far as their clergyman is concerned.' In this exigency he took charge of a few private pupils, the sons of foreigners of distinction, and by his frugality, was able to bestow a considerable portion of the emolument upon his needy peasantry.

In 1793, his eldest son Frederic fell in battle ; a loss which he felt most severely. Whilst religious worship was interdicted throughout France, and most of the clergy of Alsace were imprisoned, Oberlin was not only unmolested in his employments, but upon being cited before the Supreme Court of the department, on a charge of favoring Joseph II., he was acquitted, with an expression of regret from the bench, that even a momentary interruption of his course had taken place. The pastor's views of the morals of politics were of the old-fashioned school of patriotism.

'We are republicans,' he said in a paper addressed to the younger inhabitants, in 1794—'we are republicans, when we neither live, nor act, nor undertake any thing, nor choose a profession or situation, nor settle in life, except for the public good.

'We are republicans, when, from love to the public, we endeavor, by example as well as by precept, to stimulate our children to active beneficence ; and seek to render them useful to others, by turning their attention to such pursuits as are likely to increase the public prosperity.

'We are republicans, when we endeavor to imbue the minds of our children with the love of science, and with such knowledge as may be likely, in maturer life, to make them useful in the stations they may be called to occupy ; and when we teach them to "love their neighbors as themselves."

'Lastly, we are republicans, when we preserve our children from that self-interested spirit, which, at the present day, seems to have gained more ascendancy than ever over a nation, whose people have, notwithstanding, reason to regard each other, and to love each other as brethren, but the greater part of whom care only for themselves, and labor only for the public good when they are compelled to do so. Far from us be this spirit ! It is as anti-republican as it is anti-christian.'

In consequence of the interruption of trade, incident to the state of the country, he refused to receive any salary, or to permit any collections to be made for his personal maintenance, or the support of his various institutions of education, religion, and charity ; giving notice, that whenever any one had money or produce which he could conveniently spare, it might be

brought to him, and assuring all, that no complaint should be made if they brought nothing. In return for all the articles thus furnished, he gave an acknowledgement written on the back of the cards containing his printed texts. He was however enabled, during all the pressure of the Revolution, not only to maintain inviolate his determination to owe nothing, but to persevere in a plan he had adopted, of devoting three tenths of all his receipts to useful objects. These he divided, 1st, into a fund for building and repairing schools and churches, for the salaries of the *conductrices*, the purchase of Bibles, and the general purposes of religion; 2. For the improvement of roads, school-masters' wages, public works, Sunday dinners to the poor people who came from other villages, &c. The third was consecrated to the service of the poor. He sold all his plate in order to make a donation to a Paris Missionary Society, with the reservation of a single spoon, which he bequeathed to a similar association at Basle. He had indeed at one period of his life, determined to become a missionary himself. His design of embarking for a destitute station in Pennsylvania, was only frustrated by the occurrence of our Revolution. Nor were his sympathies less comprehensive than his charity; a description of the condition of the slaves in the West Indies so deeply affected him, that he ever afterwards abstained from the use of sugar and coffee. But the most remarkable instance of his conscientiousness, was his redeeming, at his own expense, the *assignats* of the Convention of 1794, which happened to be in the hands of the peasantry, when they were rendered nearly valueless by a decree of the Directory. To this he was urged, not only by anxiety to save his people from the loss, but to preserve, in some measure, the credit of the government, who were unable to satisfy their creditors. One of these *assignats* is extant, with this inscription by his hand, '*Ainsi, grace à Dieu, ma nation est encore déchargée d'une manière honnête de cette obligation de 125 francs.*' By taking these notes at their par value, he succeeded, in the course of twenty-five years, in redeeming all that were retained in the Ban.

The largeness of his benevolent desires was well indicated during the delirium of a severe illness, in 1794, when he continually called upon his attendants for thousands and thousands of money to promote his plans. In the subdivision of the duties of benevolence, the care of orphan children was spontaneously assumed by several respectable females, without

any expectation of reward. Two of these sisters of charity, dependent on their own labor for the means of support, had charge, at one time, of ten destitute children, whom they clothed, educated, and supported. At the instance of the Pastor, other females devoted a part of their leisure hours to reading the Bible to the aged or illiterate of the parish; and some kept free schools for such children as, from their poverty or remoteness, could not attend those in the villages.

Several of his children being married, three of his daughters to respectable clergymen, two sons settled in the ministry, and others resident in the Ban, he devolved upon them the more active duties of supervision, for which his advancing years were gradually unfitting him. Various arts had been introduced to meet the increasing industry of the population, which, in 1813, amounted to three thousand souls. Cotton-spinning and weaving, ribband-making, straw-plaiting, and dyeing, were their principal employments. That year is memorable in the annals of Waldbach for having witnessed the close of a litigation, which had been pending for more than eighty years, between the peasantry and the feudal *Seigneurs*, respecting the right to the forests. The dispute had been maintained with equal obstinacy, and at great expense, by both parties. So much did the existence of this dispute distress the pacific Pastor, that the following inscription had for many years been placed over one of his doors.

‘O God, have mercy on the Steinthal, and put an end to the law-suit!’

All the influence which he possessed over his flock was exerted to persuade them to consent to a compromise. He at length succeeded; the prefect of the province met his proposals with a readiness inspired by his respect for the character of the Pastor, and the contest was brought to an end. The Mayors, in deputation, requested Oberlin to preserve the pen, with which the amicable agreement was signed, as a trophy of the victory his mild virtues and Christian influence had gained over long animosity. Oberlin hung up the pen in his study, and often said, that the day it commemorated was one of the happiest of his life.

In the winter of 1817, he was called to follow another child to the grave. His son Henry, who had returned from Russia, where he had served as tutor in the family of Count Richter, of Riga, contracted a pulmonary disease in consequence of his

exertions in assisting to extinguish a fire, in a town in which he was spending the night, on a tour through France. He removed to Rothau for the benefit of his brother's advice, who was both a clergyman and a physician; but perceiving his complaint to be rapidly approaching a fatal crisis, he desired to die at the house of his father. The wish was no sooner known, than twelve peasants offered to carry him on a litter to the paternal roof, a distance of six miles. It was thought more advisable to convey him in a covered cart; and the twelve preceded it, removing every stone and obstacle in the road. Among his dying expressions, he frequently repeated these words of the Gospel of John, v. 24, '*de la mort à la vie—de la mort à la vie,*' from which words the Pastor, then within three years of fourscore, preached a sermon on the day succeeding his son's death.

The Royal Agricultural Society of Paris voted Oberlin a gold medal, in 1818, for his promotion of the science in the Ban. The Count de Neufchâteau, in proposing this honor, warmly testified to the improvements the pastor had effected in his humble parish, and stated that Waldbach should serve as a model to the government in all their future plans of organizing new villages. Louis XVIII. conferred upon him the decoration of the Legion of Honor. These distinctions were the more surprising to the modest recipient, from the fact that he never went to any considerable distance from his parish, and in the whole course of his life had not even seen Paris. 'The King,' he said, 'has had the goodness to send me this decoration; but what have I done to merit it? Who, in my situation, would not have acted as I have done, and perhaps better still?'

Oberlin's personal manners were admirably adapted to his station. While entire equality was maintained with all the villagers, and his notice of them was indiscriminately familiar and kind, he preserved a dignity which commanded universal and filial respect. He was careful to set an example which should not be liable to misconstruction, or appear opposed to his precepts. In this, as in every other matter, he was to the last degree scrupulous.

'On one occasion,' says a visitor, 'as we were walking up a hill, he had the arm of his son-in-law, whilst my wife was walking alone. Fearing that this might be considered self-indulgent or disrespectful by some of his younger parishioners whom we happened to pass, (though he was then in his eightieth year,) he

stopped to make an apology for this apparent disregard of the law of civility and kindness.'

'I happened one day, when we were driven by a man, who seemed to go in a hazardous manner, to say "take care." The pastor appeared hurt at this admonition, both on my account and on that of the driver. He assured me that all was safe, and at the end of the drive, took the greatest pains to prevent any feeling of vexation, which might arise in the mind of his parishioner.'

His activity was unceasing. He was at one time minister, schoolmaster, farmer, mechanic and physician to the parish. He would climb the steepest of the Vosges, through cold and snow, to visit the sick, often travelling to Strasburg in the night to procure medicine. His sermons, catechetical exercises, societies for religious conversation and charitable purposes, were, some one of them, almost daily demanding his presence. Besides these clerical services, he addressed circulars to particular classes of his people with advice or monitions on subjects of moral or domestic concern, which could not well be presented from the pulpit. Sometimes he addressed to them questions, to which they were expected to return written replies. Every Friday he conducted a service in German, for the benefit of those to whom that language was more familiar than the French. On this occasion he laid aside all formality, the women knit stockings for the poor, whilst the patriarch would pursue a train of familiar reflections on some portion of Scripture. To prevent weariness, he would occasionally inquire, 'Well, my children, are you not tired? Have you not heard enough? Tell me, my friends.' And according to the frank reply of 'No, Papa, go on,' or 'Enough, we believe, for this time,' he would resume or discontinue the discourse. His toleration was unbounded. Roman Catholics, Lutherans and Calvinists, met at his communion table; and to meet their respective scruples on the subject of the species of bread used in the sacrament, he provided wafers, and leavened and unleavened bread. In the early part of his ministry, he reprehended a mob which abused a poor Jew, who happened to stray into the parish, observing with unusual warmth, that if the stranger wanted the name of a Christian, their conduct proved that they were equally destitute of the Christian spirit.

Oberlin amused himself with the study of physiognomy and phrenology, to which he was probably invited by the warm friendship which subsisted for several years between him and

Lavater, of Zurich. He collected a large number of profiles under which he portrayed the characters of his friends, and the supposed characteristics of strangers. Upon his own profile, he made this antithetical estimate of himself.

‘I am a strange compound of contradictory qualities. I do not yet exactly know, what to think of myself. I am intelligent, and yet possessed of very limited powers:—prudent and more politic than my fellow-clergymen, but also very apt to blunder, especially when in the least excited. I am firm, yet of a yielding disposition; and both, in certain cases, to a great degree. I am not only daring, but even courageous; whilst, at the same time, I am often in secret very cowardly. I am very upright and sincere, yet also very complaisant to men, and in a degree, therefore, insincere. I am a German and a Frenchman; noble, generous, ready to render service, faithful, very grateful,—deeply affected by the least benefit or kindness, which is ever after engraven on my heart; and yet again flighty and indifferent. I am irritable to a formidable degree. He who treats me generously soon gains an ascendancy over me; but opposition creates in me an astonishing degree of firmness, especially in matters of conscience. I have a lively imagination, but no memory, properly speaking. The histories which I have taken pains to impress on my mind remain with me, but dates and the names of persons I often forget the next day, notwithstanding all the pains I have taken to remember them. I used to speak Latin fluently, and even elegantly, but now I cannot utter three or four words together. I make selections from books, and instruct others in some branch of science for a long time; but a few years after, my scholars, even if they know nothing, have then what I taught them, many in their turn become my teachers, and the books from which I made extracts (with the exception of those of a certain description) appear wholly new to me.

‘I habitually work my way through my studies till I obtain clear ideas; but if I wish to penetrate deeper, every thing vanishes before me. I have a great talent for removing difficulties, in order to render every thing smooth and easy to myself, and to every body else. I am so extremely sensitive, tender and compassionate, that I can find neither words nor expressions corresponding to my feelings, so that the latter almost overpower me, and occasion me acute pain. I am always busy and industrious, but also fond of ease and indolence. I am generally quick in resolving, and equally so in executing. I have a peculiar esteem for the female sex. I am a very great admirer of painting, music, and poetry, and yet I have no skill in any of them. Me-

chanics, natural history, and so forth, constitute my favorite studies. I am very fond of regularity, and of arranging and classifying, but my weak memory, added to constant employment, renders it difficult to me. I am given to planning and scheming, and yet endeavor, in my peculiar way, to do things in the best manner.

‘I am a genuine soldier, but was more so before my bodily powers were so much weakened ; I was formerly anxious to be the foremost in danger, and the firmest in pain, but have now lost that desire. From my childhood I have felt a longing and preponderating desire for a higher state of existence, and therefore a wish for death. I am the greatest admirer of military order and subordination, not however in a spirit of slavery, but of that noble and affectionate attachment which compels the coward to show courage, and the disorderly to be punctual. I feel no obstinacy or disinclination to yield to strong internal conviction, but on the other hand, a fervent heart-felt joy in yielding to both great and small, high and low, gentlemen and peasants, children and servants, and thence a willingness to listen, and an inclination to suffer myself, if possible, to be convinced. But when I feel no conviction, I never think of yielding. I am humorous, and a little witty or satirical, but without intentional malice.’

After entering upon his eightieth year, Oberlin was obliged gradually to retire from all his active duties ; but he was able to exercise a general superintendence over his people, and devoted much of his time to praying for them, which he did *seriatim* in the order of their baptismal registry. The vigor of his intellect remained, and he wrote several essays, amongst which was a refutation of *Cicero de Senectute*. His mortal illness attacked him on the 28th of May, 1826, and with a calmness entirely accordant with his character, he resigned his being on the 1st of June, in his eighty-sixth year. The decease of the personage, who for nearly sixty years had presided over the destinies of their little world, and had guided them and their fathers from ignorance and wretchedness, to the blessings of intelligence and domestic comfort, excited inexpressible sensations in the community. They were at once deprived of their spiritual, intellectual, and social guide, who had led them from their infancy and provided for all the variety of their wants. The whole population crowded to view the beloved remains, during the four days that intervened between his death and interment. The procession at the funeral extended the distance of two miles from the parsonage to the

Foudai church. During its progress, the melancholy toll of the village bell mingled with the chanting of the school-children; the burying-ground was surrounded by females of the Roman Catholic church, habited in mourning, and kneeling in silent prayer. The body was carried into the church, where a paper was read, which had been prepared by Oberlin in anticipation of the occasion, in which he gave an outline of his career, committed his children to the protection of his people, and concluded with a solemn exhortation to remember his admonitions. After other impressive exercises, the body was committed to the earth.

Respecting the present state of Steinthal we have no account, further than that a number of benevolent individuals in England and the continent have undertaken to raise a charitable fund to bear the name of Oberlin, and which shall be devoted to the support of the various seminaries he established.

The compiler of the interesting and well-written biography, from which we have gleaned this article, is a female, who, by withholding her name, modestly declines the honor that is due to her, of having introduced to the world a character of rare lustre in its annals. The philanthropy and piety are above suspicion, which animated a young man of ambition, possessed of talents which would have gained him a respectable eminence in the pursuits of literature, to consign himself to a life of labor in an obscure corner of the world, among a race whose manners and minds were destitute of refinement. It was in such a situation, unknown abroad, and with no resource but in himself, that he persevered for years in the ungracious contest against native prejudices. His persistence, however, was rewarded; and insignificant as the peaceful region which sprung up under his reforming energies may be deemed by history, the example is colossal, and abounds in lessons useful to the world.

ART. IX.—*Geology.*

Geological Text Book. By AMOS EATON, A. M. Albany. 1830.

Truth has had to contend, in all ages, with bigotry and ignorance. Nor is the conflict yet over. A few are still found impotently opposing nature and reason. But we have no fears for the result; the light of knowledge is beaming upon the